

# UNTOLD

STORY LEADS FROM MONTANA



WINTER 2003/04 • visitmt.com

## When Winter Goes Wacky

Winter in Montana means skiing, snowmobiling, sledding, and all things that celebrate Mother Nature's fluffy stuff. And while Montana's winter events are always fun, that doesn't mean they have to necessarily be sane. After all, along with old favorites such as races and winter carnivals, we also have events dedicated to pinheads and mannequins.

Winter is actually one of Montana's hottest seasons—hottest for festivals, fun and events, that is. Here is a rundown of the state's premier winter events for this year—from the sublime to the downright odd.

### Pinhead Classic

**Bridger Bowl, March 20, 2004**

For 23 years, it's been a tradition. Make that 24 this year, with yet another year of telemark skiing in costume (the theme varies each year; this year's theme is still under wraps at press time, so check [www.bridgerbowl.com](http://www.bridgerbowl.com) for updates). The Pinhead Classic offers prizes for everything but the fastest time.

### Mannequin Jump

**Showdown Ski Area, April 10, 2004**

An annual event of the Great Falls Ski Club, this event features mannequins launched off of a large jump near the base



photo by Doug Wales/Bridger Bowl

*The 2002 edition of the inimitable "Pinhead Classic" at Bridger Bowl.*

lodge. Judges offer prizes—including the coveted Golden Sow Award—to entries based on design and freestyle merits.

### Winter Carnival

**Red Lodge Mountain, March 5-7, 2004**

This year's theme is "superheroes," which means, of course, visitors should dress as superheroes. Events include the Cardboard Classic (a race of vehicles built entirely of cardboard) and the National Ski Joring Finals (horses pull skiers over jumps).

### "Take Your Children to the Snow" Week

**Big Mountain, Jan. 26-Feb. 2, 2004**

To encourage youngsters to give snow a try, Big Mountain will offer special junior lift tickets for just \$17.

### "Best of the West" Beef Showcase

**Sidney, Feb. 03, 2004**

The streets of Sidney become a market for bulls and heifers, with ranchers from all over the world attending.

### 24th Annual Southeastern Montana Juried Exhibit

**Miles City, Feb. 1-March 14, 2004**

Paintings, drawings, photos, sculpture and other art created by artists in Montana and the adjoining states.

### Winternational XVII Sports Festival

**Butte, Jan. 31-March 28, 2004**

Nineteen events (ranging from bench press to downhill skiing) spread across eight weeks of competition.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

To Enjoy Glacier Park, Follow a Couple of Tips. Ski Tips.

Virginia City becomes "Social City" for the Holidays

All the World's a Stage at Alberta Bair Theater in Billings

Great Northern Debut for Musician Philip Aaberg

Fish in Glasgow; Catch \$2,000

Everybody's Dancing in the Moonlight at Montana's Newest Ski Resort

# To enjoy Glacier Park, follow a couple of tips. Ski tips.

Any time of year in Glacier National Park is memorable. But thanks to guided nordic ski tours, winter may be the most magical time in one of America's favorite parks. Two companies, Izaak Walton Inn and Glacier Park Ski Tours, provide everything the skier needs: food, transportation, expert guides, equipment rentals, and even...igloos? (Yup, one of the tours is an "Igloo Tour.")

The Izaak Walton Inn, which borders the Park at Essex, was originally built in 1939 to house workers of the Great Northern Railway. Trains remain a big part of the Inn today: it's still the only "flag stop" along the entire Amtrak Empire Builder route (trains stop twice a day), and the resort features heated "caboose cabins" built of actual rail cars. From mid-November through mid-April each year, the Izaak Walton Inn takes lucky ski or snowshoeing guests on one of their "Top Ten Tours" of



photo courtesy Glacier Park Ski Tours

*Visitors make their own trails in Glacier.*

Glacier. Favorite trips include the McDonald Lake tour (which parallels a portion of the Going-to-the-Sun Road), the Autumn Creek tour along the Continental Divide, and the Snyder Creek tour, which passes an alpine lake surrounded by a glacial cirque.

At Glacier Park Ski Tours in Whitefish, four guides offer a range of full-day trips, plus a few guided tours with unique spins. Full Moon tours happen, appropriately enough, on all the full moon evenings every month, lasting from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm.

Or, for those who really "get into" winter, the Igloo Tours are a true hands-on experience. Guides show guests how to build igloos and snow forts, then sleep in them; guests who don't want to build their own accommodations can also sleep in tents. Igloo trips last from three days to a week or more, and guide Rusty Wells says guests are constantly surprised at how warm the igloos are.

To find out more about guided ski and snowshoe trips in Glacier National Park, contact the Izaak Walton Inn in Essex (406-888-5700 or [izaakwaltoninn.com](http://izaakwaltoninn.com)) or Glacier Park Ski Tours in Whitefish (800-646-6043, ext 3724 or [glacierparkskitours.com](http://glacierparkskitours.com)).

Glacier National Park, in Montana's northwest corner, is open year-round. The Flathead Valley offers nearby dining, lodging and other services, as well as Glacier Park International Airport (FCA on airline tickets). For accommodations and other information go to [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com).

## Virginia City Becomes "Social City" For The Holidays

Every weekend between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Virginia City will harken back to its close-knit community roots with its Fifth Annual Christmas Socials and Market Weekends.

And what, exactly, is that? In 1999, organizers outlined a vision of Virginia city as a "magical stage" for an annual winter program combining holiday shopping with unique social and cultural events—events inspired by the natural beauty, historic architecture and unique setting of Virginia City. At that meeting, the Christmas Socials and Market Weekends were born. Each year since then, the city has dedicated every Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the holiday season to celebrations of the season.

Festivities kick off Thanksgiving weekend with the traditional lighting of the Community Christmas tree. The exact events vary from year to year, but all are centered on one of three themes: 1) Shopping and entertainment at local Virginia City businesses; 2) Social events that encourage revelers to join together for feasting or celebration; and 3) Cultural events exploring Virginia City's historic and artistic treasures. As the event's Philosophy Statement says: "Our mission is to nourish and celebrate an intimate and creative community spirit; to extend a season of homegrown

commerce; to enjoy the holidays with social and cultural festivities that remain small-scale, personally intimate, inspiring, educational, uncrowded, unhurried, and quiet—all forms of the true wealth found in our landscape, architecture, and within the many 'characters' of our community."

In the past, events have included such interesting offerings as champagne brunches with local historians, dramatic presentations, ornament workshops for children, and concerts in many genres. Christmas Socials and Market Weekends begin Friday, November 28 and run through Sunday, December 21. For more information or a complete list of events, contact the Virginia City Chamber of Commerce at (800) 829-2969, or [www.virginiacitychamber.com](http://www.virginiacitychamber.com).

Virginia City, Montana is widely regarded as America's best-preserved gold mining town, with many of the 19th-century buildings still standing at their original location. Today, shops, restaurants, theaters and other businesses occupy historic downtown Virginia City and its nearby cousin, Nevada City. Virginia City is in Southwest Montana on MT287; the nearest airport is Butte. For accommodations and other information, go to [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com).



*Part of Virginia City's festive holiday decor.*



## All The World's a Stage at Alberta Bair Theater in Billings

On November 13, 1931, the last art deco style theater in the United States built by the 20th Century Fox Corporation opened. Screening "Merely Mary Ann" with Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, the Fox Theater's opening was accompanied by a parade and street dance.

More than 70 years later, the venue, now known as the Alberta Bair Theater, has grown to become the largest performing arts theater in the Northern Rockies region. But it wasn't an easy journey.



*The Alberta Bair Theater, downtown Billings.*

The Fox Theater was home to the Billings Community Concerts Organization for more fifty years, and the Billings Symphony and Chorale for some thirty years. During this time, The Fox Theater also offered live plays and musicals benefiting the Fox Committee for the Performing Arts. This committee brought famous performers such as Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Charles, George Winston and Judy Collins to Billings.

In the late 70s and early 80s, the Fox started showing its age, and when a movie house company planned to remodel the historic theater as a three-screen cineplex, the Fox Committee stepped in again. It placed the theater on the National Register of Historic Places, and led a drive to raise money for the theater's renovation. In 1987, the newly renovated theater once again opened its doors, this time as the Alberta Bair Theater. The theater was renamed for Alberta Bair, who was one of the leaders of the restoration effort, and whose family donated the original space for the theater.

Since 1987, the Alberta Bair Theater has hosted hundreds of annual performances, ranging from plays to concerts to ballets. The 2003 season is in full swing, with numerous performances by the Billings Symphony, the Montana Repertory Theater, the Rimrock Opera, and the inaugural season of the Northern Plains Ballet Company. Upcoming events include performances of the Broadway musicals "Fame" and "The Music Man," Philadelphia's Koresch Dance Company, and China's world-famous Shanghai Circus.

For more information on the Alberta Bair Theater for the Performing Arts, contact 406-256-8915 or [www.albertabairtheater.org](http://www.albertabairtheater.org).

*The Alberta Bair Theater is in Billings, Montana's largest city, reached via Interstates 90 and 94 and Billings Logan International Airport. For accommodations and other information, go to [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com).*

## Great Northern Debut for Musician Philip Aaberg

Philip Aaberg, grammy-nominated pianist and composer, has been busy inside—and outside—of the recording studio. His latest project? The Great Northern Bed & Breakfast, a restored 1909 farm cottage on the high plains of Chester, Montana. Located along Amtrak's historic "Great Northern" line, the new Bed & Breakfast features a stained glass window (created by local artist Craig Waldron) depicting the Empire Builder passenger train thundering across the Montana landscape. The Great Northern line even inspired the breakfast dishes served; meals served to guests take their cues from historic menus found for the Empire Builder and Northern Star dining cars.

Aaberg is known worldwide for his musical performances and compositions. He has

seven solo albums to his credit (including "Live From Montana," nominated for a 2002 Grammy award), and has appeared as a guest musician on more than 2,000 albums ranging from rock to experimental jazz. Aaberg has appeared with the Boston Pops (cont. on back)



*The Great Northern Bed & Breakfast.*

## Fish in Glasgow; Catch \$2,000

On Saturday, February 14, 2004 (that's Valentine's Day), the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce will present its Eighth Annual Ice Fishing Tournament in the Marina Bay at Fort Peck Lake. Lucky anglers may catch perch, lake trout, northern pike, walleyes, or even the most prized catch of all: \$2,000.



*The 2002 tournament: fun on ice.*

To start the day, volunteers auger a total of 200 holes in the ice at Marina Bay. Participants buy holes for \$50 each (or \$100 for three holes), and the fishing begins. At the end of the day, the largest fish caught (any species) also snags the top prize of \$2,000. Other prizes, both cash and merchandise, are provided by local businesses sponsoring the event.

Best of all, participants don't even need to be particularly skilled fishermen to win. For instance, in 2001, a rather small 4.8 pound northern pike caught by Russell White took the grand prize—mostly because it was the only fish caught that year.

Anglers who want to cast their lines only have to bring their equipment, their warm clothes, and anything else they need to stay on the ice for three hours. The contest kicks off at noon, and the final whistle blows at 3:00 pm.

## Everybody's Dancing in The Moonlight at Montana's Newest Ski Resort

This year, the biggest buzz in skiing isn't about equipment, or technology, or clothing. It's about more skiing, because the West's newest ski resort is opening at Big Sky, Montana: Moonlight Basin. The new resort is located on the north face of Lone Mountain, a name many may recognize: it's the peak that's also home to Big Sky Resort, consistently ranked as one of North America's finest resorts.

Granted, it's not every day a new ski resort opens. But then, the story behind this resort isn't everyday, either. The three partners in the resort, Joe Vujovich, Lee Poole and Keith Brown, envisioned a resort that emphasized preservation as much as skiing. "(The goal was) to preserve the land, return as much of it as possible to its natural state, and ensure that development of select portions was carried forward in a responsible manner," according to Mr. Poole.

Moonlight Basin seems to have accomplished all those ambitious goals. When it opens for its first ski season in November of 2003, it will offer four lifts—including Montana's only high-speed six-passenger chairlift—serving more than 1,500 acres of



skiable terrain and 1,850 feet of vertical drop. But perhaps the single factor that has skiers everywhere salivating already is the resort's location. Because it's on the North Face of Lone Mountain, visitors should see deep powder that's drier and more consistent.

But that's only the skiing side of the story. The partners' plan called for large portions of the 25,000-acre parcel to be set aside as a preserve. Approximately half of the parcel has already been placed in permanent conservation easements, and the group is currently considering plans to provide permanent protection to additional areas. Poole, Vujovich and Brown also

brought in foresters, water resource consultants and wildlife experts to study the rest of the area and guide their projects.

While the partners always knew the land would be ideal for skiing, they turned to a wildlife expert for his judgment. "To our surprise, he told us that ski trail development would actually enhance the wildlife habitat," said Mr. Poole, "because the trails would provide more forage and provide summer habitat for several species." Wildlife surveys have revealed that the elk population on the land has more than doubled since the partners purchased the land from a subsidiary of the Burlington Northern Railroad 11 years ago.

For more information on Moonlight Basin, call 406-993-6000, or go to [www.moonlightbasin.com](http://www.moonlightbasin.com).

*Moonlight Basin is located at Big Sky, Montana, midway between Yellowstone National Park and Bozeman, Montana on US 191. The closest airport is in Bozeman, one hour north. For accommodations and other information go to [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com).*

## Philip Aaberg continued...

Orchestra and numerous other orchestras, as well as musicians such as Peter Gabriel, Elvin Bishop and John Hiatt. In addition, his performance on PBS's "All-American Jazz" was nominated for an Emmy.

Aaberg's love for music also inspired his latest project: Sweetgrass Music Studios, built adjacent to the Great Northern Bed & Breakfast. Sweetgrass Music produces recordings and sheet music folios; it's also the base of operations for Aaberg's teaching, touring and commissioned compositions.

Aaberg is also committed to the vital role of the arts in education. In 2000, he established "Arts Without Boundaries," a non-profit foundation dedicated to bringing

renowned touring artists into classes across Montana for workshops, master classes and general assemblies. The residencies and support created by the Arts Without Boundaries program continue to help schools keep music and the arts an essential part of education.

For more information on the Great Northern Bed & Breakfast, Sweetgrass Music or Arts Without Boundaries, contact 406-759-5900 or [www.philipaaberg.com](http://www.philipaaberg.com).

*The Great Northern Bed & Breakfast, Sweetgrass Music and Arts Without Boundaries are all located in Chester Montana, along Northcentral Montana's "high line" on US Highway 2. Great Falls International Airport is about two hours away.*

## FROM MONTANA

The diversity of events, places and people in Montana is almost as wide as the state itself. We hope to give you a taste of that diversity with this quarterly newsletter. In addition, the following services are offered to editors, writers and producers:

### Visual Materials

Color slides and stock video footage are available for editorial use.

### Writer/Photographer Referrals

We can put you in contact with many of Montana's most talented and experienced freelance writers and photographers.

### Editorial Copy/Calendar of Events

We can provide background information or editorial copy for many subjects. We also maintain a calendar of events for the entire state.

### Individual Attention

If you need the latest vacation guide and road map of Montana, a liaison with other government agencies or detailed information to fit a specific story angle, we're here to assist you.

Contact Donnie Sexton, Publicity/Photography  
[publicity@visitmt.com](mailto:publicity@visitmt.com) / 406-841-2897